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“ ‘Con las espadas altas y desnudas’: Cervantes, Time and the freedom of the novel in Javier Marías’s *Tu rostro mañana*”

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Javier Marías’s latest novel, *Tu rostro mañana*, is made up of three, separately published volumes.[1] They revolve around the first-person narrator and protagonist Jacques Deza, also variously called Jacobo, Jacopo, Giacomo, Jack, Jaime, Santiago, Yago, or Diego. This recalls, quite evidently, the various names applied to Don Quijote — Quijada, Quijana, Quesada, Quijano and Quijótiz — and also the uncertainty surrounding the name of one of the characters in Juan Benet’s *Una meditación* — Rumbal, Rombal, Rubal, Robal, Rumbás — (Marías is indebted to Benet in more ways than one) and constitutes a recurrent feature in Marías’s narratives, which can be traced back to *Travesía del horizonte*’s Holden Branshaw or Hordern Bragshawe — in fact, there are a couple of intertextual references to this Branshaw in *Tu rostro mañana* (*2*. pp. 48 and 50) — and *El siglo*’s Dato or Dado and is related to a certain indeterminacy surrounding identity (Juan Benet, *Una meditación* [Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1969], Javier Marías, *Travesía del horizonte* [Barcelona: La Gaya Ciencia, 1972] and Javier Marías, *El siglo* [Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1983]). This indeterminacy has even confused some critics, who do not always seem to read as closely

[1] Javier Marías, *Tu rostro mañana. 1. Fiebre y lanza* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 2002), *Tu rostro mañana. 2. Baile y sueño* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 2004) and *Tu rostro mañana 3. Veneno y sombra y adiós* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 2007). Further references given after quotations in the text are to one or the other of the volumes of the novel, indicated as either *1*., *2.* or *3*. respectively, unless otherwise stated.

as one might expect; in fact, the narrator does clarify at one point that his actual name is Jacques Deza and that he owes this French name to his maternal grandfather, who was of French descent; *1.*, p. 209).

It should be noted that the explicit references or allusions to Cervantes in *Tu rostro mañana* are, in great part, the result of Javier Marías's high regard for Cervantes and his novels, in particular the freedom of the genre attested in Cervantes's conception of it and the liberties he takes with the narrative form. Indeed, Cervantes and the *Quijote* are the writer and work cited most regularly by Javier Marías in his non-literary work, by far. The *Quijote*, together with the eminently *quixotic Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne (a work Marías translated into Spanish), are probably the two novels in the history of literature held in the highest regard by Javier Marías (he has explained that his favourite book actually is *Tristram Shandy* — his own translation, to be precise; "Mi libro favorito", Javier Marías, *Literatura y fantasma. Edición ampliada*, Madrid: Alfaguara, 2001, pp. 398-401).

So, for example, simply glancing at the collection of essays or articles on literature entitled *Literatura y fantasma* I have counted approximately thirty separate references to the *Quijote* and its author (Javier Marías, *Literatura y fantasma. Edición ampliada*, Madrid: Alfaguara, 2001). Thus, in the seminal essay "Desde una novela no necesariamente castiza", the *Quijote* is cited as one of the few Spanish novels appealing to an adolescent (*Literatura y fantasma*, p. 56); in another article on his novel *El hombre sentimental* ("Lo que no se ha cumplido"), Marías likens the female character of that novel, Natalia Manur, to Dulcinea: "quizá pertenezca a esa larga estirpe de mujeres de ficción que (como Penélope, como Desdémona, como Dulcinea y tantas otras de inferior alcurnia) están y quizá no son: seguramente las más peligrosas para quienes entran en contacto con ellas" (p.

81); in an article on his errant writing process, "Errar con brújula", Cervantes is cited as one of the masters of digressiveness: "Cervantes o Sterne o Proust, o más modernamente Nabokov, Bernhard o Benet han sido maestros en esa errabundia de los textos, o, si se prefiere, en la divagación, la digresión, el inciso, la invocación lírica, el denuesto y la metáfora prolongada y autónoma, respectivamente" (p.109); Cervantes is, in relation to this reason, referred to as the "modelo de novelista moderno" (p. 347-348); elsewhere, in a defense of the absolute freedom of the genre of the novel ("tan novela es el *Quijote* como *Alicia en el País de las Maravillas*, *En busca del tiempo perdido*, *Lolita* o *Trastorno*", he says in another article in which he speaks of "la falta de características propias" of the genre, p. 292), Marías again highlights the digressivenes of the *Quijote* ("el dispersísimo, digresivo, episódico, siempre impertinente y esforzadamente ampliado *Quijote*"; p. 130; in "Cuéntale el cuento", Marías lauds Cabrera Infante's incorporation of digression in the story being recounted and its progress and groups him, with Cervantes, Montaigne or Sterne, into the category of "el escritor más libre de todos los escritores libres posibles"); in "Lo que no sucede y sucede" the *Quijote* marks the origin of the "género híbrido y flexible" (p. 111) that is the novel — in another article Marías speaks of the novel as "tan híbrido, tan elástico y también tan poderoso que hasta se ha permitido desaparecer y reaparecer varias veces a lo largo de los siglos. Su más reciente y duradera estancia comienza en 1605, con el *Quijote*" (p. 212) — and its protagonist is an example of the actual event that a novel represents, the reality it acquires: "las novelas *suceden* por el hecho de existir y ser leídas, y, bien mirado, al cabo del tiempo tiene más realidad Don Quijote que ninguno de sus contemporáneos históricos de la España del siglo XVII" (p. 115); Marías likens himself to Cervantes when he explains that he could have been more

productive over the course of the years, had he not had "'otras cosas en que ocuparme', como dijo Cervantes con sencillez y misterio para explicar su silencio de veinte años entre la *Galatea* y el *Quijote*" (p. 119); in "Siete razones para no escribir novelas y una solo para escribirlas" the *Quijote* is cited when the single reason is given for writing novels:

> Escribirlas permite al novelista vivir buena parte de su tiempo instalado en la ficción, seguramente el único lugar soportable, o el que lo es más. Esto quiere decir que le permite vivir en el reino de lo que pudo ser y nunca fue, por eso mismo en el territorio de lo que aún es posible […] Lo que *sólo* es posible sigue siendo posible, eternamente posible en cualquier época y en cualquier lugar, y por eso se puede leer aún hoy el *Quijote* o *Madame Bovary*" (pp. 163-164);

"Nuestra ventura" is a short article dedicated in its entirety to making a case for reading the *Quijote* (pp. 359-360); elsewhere in the collection, there are references to Don Quijote's loss of innocence when he discovers someone is narrating his adventures (p. 170), the devastating impact of the *Quijote* on Spanish literature ("Quizá una de las razones por las que la novela española en su conjunto ha sido bastante pobre —pienso en los siglos XVIII y XIX, fructíferos en el resto de Europa y aun en América— es que tuvo que partir del *Quijote*, que dejó tanto la lengua como el género que inauguraba para el arrastre", p. 205), or Cervantes as an example of a writer who has recounted with verisimilitude "lo que nos ocurre", not forgetting the fundamental importance of the imagination in the process ("justamente para contar eso, lo que nos ocurre, nunca basta con haberlo vivido, ni siquiera con saber observarlo ni saber explicarlo, ni siquiera entenderlo, sino que además hay que imaginarlo", pp.214-215), amongst numerous other references (see, for example, pp. 218, 245, 271, 283, 323, 338, 345, 398-401, 412, 424). I have identified many other instances of references to Cervantes in all of the other collections of essays and articles by Marías (they

are too numerous to mention here), as well as in some of his novels, as in *Tu rostro mañana*.

In this novel there are numerous explicit (and implicit) references to Cervantes, such as the quotation from the prologue of *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* which has been cited often by Marías (it has also appeared in some of his other novels, such as in *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí*, a novel which ends with precisely these lines [Madrid: Anagrama, 1994; see pp. 42, 155, 367]): "Había dicho en español las palabras 'donaire' y 'gracia', parafraseando quizá a Cervantes fuera de su *Don Quijote* […]. No me resistí a intentar comprobarlo, y aproveché su pausa para citar lentamente, […] murmurando: 'Adiós gracias; adiós, donaires; adiós, regocijados amigos; que yo me voy muriendo...'" (*1*., p. 411); in this first volume of *Tu rostro mañana* this quotation is repeated and completed and glossed a few pages later by Jacques:

> "Adiós, gracias; adios, donaires; adiós, regocijados amigos; que yo me voy muriendo, y deseando veros presto contentos en la otra vida". Eso esperaba Cervantes, pensé,, no quejas ni acusaciones, no reproches ni ajustes de cuentas ni resarcimiento por los sinsabores y agravios terrenos, a él le tocó sufrir unos cuantos. Ni tan siquiera justicia última, que es lo que más se echa en falta desde el descreimiento. Sino la reanudación de las gracias y los donaires, del regocijo de los amigos, contentos también en la otra vida. Es lo único de lo que se despide, lo único que desearía seguir conservando en la enternidad, allí donde vaya. Varias veces había oído hablar a mi padre de esos adioses escritos no tan célebres como deberían serlo, están en el libro que casi nadie lee y que quizá, sin embargo, sea superior a todos, hasta al *Quijote*. Me hubiera gustado recordarle a Wheeler esa cita entera, pero no me atreví insistir, a desviarlo de su camino con eso" (*1*., p. 422-423).

In this context it is evident that Cervantes also becomes a nexus between Wheeler, the famous *cervantista*, and Deza's father. The quotation from the *Persiles* reappears in various guises in the other two volumes as well, together with additional references to Cervantes

and the *Quijote* in different contexts (see *2.*, 131, 242, 244, 334-335, 392, 399; *3.*, 335-336, 419, 473, 485).[2]

It is also worth mentioning in this context that between September and December of 1984, Javier Marías was granted a term's leave during the tenure of his two-year *Lectorship* of Spanish at Oxford to deliver a course on the *Quijote* as Visiting Professor at Wellesley College (Massachusetts); despite his reluctance to publish these lecture notes — "no creo […] que estas notas merezcan la publicación […] nunca fueron redactadas para que las leyera nadie" — a small part appeared in fragmentary form in the Spring 2005 issue of *Club Cultura*, and they bear testimony to his very close reading of, and fruitful engagement with, the novel (Marías, "El *Quijote* de Wellesley", *Club Cultura*, 6, 2005, pp. 60-63). In short, therefore, it could be argued that Cervantes and the *Quijote* seem to constitute perhaps the single most important cornerstone of Marías's poetics, alongside *Tristram Shandy*.

But let us return to the novel that concerns us here and to one or two of the ways in which it bears traits of a the Cervantine conception of the novel form, the freedom of the narrative form and its digressivenes. Its narrator is, ostensibly, the same character as the protagonist-narrator of Marías's 1989 Oxford novel, *Todas las almas*, whose name in that novel had never been specified.[3] He now finds himself back in England and working, at first, for BBC Radio, before being hired, through the mediation of his Oxford friend, the retired Professor Sir Peter Wheeler, as an "intérprete de vidas", as his new employer puts it

[2] For a comprehensive list of all the quotations and paraphrases to be found in *Tu rostro mañana* and their sources see Antonio Iriarte's " 'Cito a menudo para mis adentros': Citas y alusiones en *Tu rostro mañana* de Javier Marías", in *No debería uno contar nunca nada. Tu rostro mañana de Javier Marías*, edited by Alexis Grohmann and Maarten Steenmeijer, Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2009.

somewhat grandiloquently, a "traductor o intérprete de las personas", according to the narrator (*1.*, pp. 31-2). This involves Deza exercising, in the service of a secret intelligence corps part of the British Secret Service, a gift he is perceived to possess, a "don o maldición", which allows him to discern or become an "intérprete"

> de sus conductas y reacciones, de sus inclinaciones y caracteres y sus capacidades de aguante; de su maleabilidad y su sumisión, de sus voluntades desmayadas o firmes, sus inconstancias, sus límites, sus inocencias, su falta de escrúpulos y su resistencia; de sus posibles grados de lealtad o vileza y sus calculables precios y sus venenos y sus tentaciones

and, crucially, "de sus deducibles historias, no pasadas sino venideras, las que aún no habían ocurrido y podían por tanto impedirse. O bien podían fraguarse" (*1.*, p. 32). An interpreter, I suppose, translating not what is said, but what is not said but can be apprehended and rendered intelligible, a person's make-up, including, significantly, his or her future comportment or conduct.

However, this aspect of the novel's story is not the whole story: it serves in part as a vehicle allowing Deza's and the author's (by now characteristic) exacerbated associative faculties to unfold, their conjectural, imaginative, aphoristic, repetitive, analogical, superstitious, somewhat obsessive and eminently digressive narration to take shape, in which, as is always the case in Marías, the least element is potentially the center of a network of relationships, of a subtly interconnected web, which the narrator may not be able to restrain himself from tracing.

Although Deza is employed mainly to turn his gaze upon the future, to demonstrate foreknowledge or prescience (this latter word is actually introduced in its English form and

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[3] Javier Marías, *Todas las almas* (Madrid: Anagrama, 1989).

discussed),[4] he is also (again, something characteristic of Marías's late fiction) concerned with recounting the past, memories of the past, the Spanish Civil War especially, and certain dead people. And this is because, as so many of Marías's narrators, he, too, sees himself as a link between the living and the dead. This is made explicit at the end of "Fiebre", Part I of the first volume. Deza spends most of the night feverishly leafing through books on or touching on the Civil War (by Alcofar Nassaes, Benet, Fleming, Howson, Jackson, Jelinek, Koestler, Lucas Phillips, Orwell, Payne, Preston, Riesenfeld, Salas Larrazábal, "Tello-Trapp", Thomas, Tinker, and Walsh) in Wheeler's library (in whose house he spends the night), in order to shed light on certain elements and stories, a curiosity triggered by his conversation with Wheeler (in the main, the notorious arrest, torture and execution, the flaying alive, by Spanish Communists, of Andreu Nin, leader of the dissident communist party POUM, described by Preston as "one of the most horrific incidents of the Civil War").[5] He is eventually lulled to sleep by the sound of the river Cherwell outside the bedroom window and in a state between wakefulness and sleep thinks or dreams: "Yo soy el río, soy el río y por tanto un hilo de continuidad entre vivos y muertos" (*1*. p. 224).

This explains the constant forward and backward eddying of the narrative, the deliberate transgression of chronological order, the non-correspondence between the time

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[4] "Había empleado la palabra '*prescience*', culta pero no tan infrecuente en inglés como lo es en español 'presciencia', entre nosotros nadia la dice y casi nadie la escribe y muy pocos la saben, nos inclinamos más por "premonición" y "presentimiento" y aun "corazonada", todas tienen que ver con las sensaciones, un pálpito —también eso existe, coloquialmente—, más con la emociones que con el saber, la certeza, ninguna implica el *conocimiento* de las cosas futuras, que es lo que de hecho significan "*prescience*" y también "presciencia", el *conocimiento* de lo que aún no existe y no ha sudedido (nada que ver, por tanto, con las profecías ni los augurios ni las adivinaciones ni los vaticinios, menos aún con lo que los sacamuelas de hoy llaman "videncia", todo ello incompatible con la mera noción de "ciencia")' (*1*. p . 111).

[5] Paul Preston, *A Concise History of the Spanish Civil War* (London: Fontana Press, 1996).

of events and the time of the narrative. The 1,590-page-long narrative is structured, typically, around a very limited number of scenes (a dinner party, two or three extensive conversations, a couple of monologues and scenes of observations of the lives of others, a couple of interpreting sessions, a scene set in a London discothèque, and two or three fairly compact scenes in Madrid, which move at a faster pace in the third volume). The temporal sequence of the narration, however, is determined by the narrator's meandering mind. So, the narrative expands or travels from the beginning to its end not so much by way of a strictly diachronic progression, but, rather, through digressive amplifications. Thus, there is a certain diegetical atrophy, relatively little happens in terms of action; but what little does occur is exploited and "opened up" through the narrator's associative faculties, digressing and interpolating material, such as the stories that take us back to the Civil War, the Second World War and the Franco Years.[6]

The scene in the discothèque in *Baile y sueño* is, without doubt, the most elaborate instance not only of this process, but of other related aspects. It dominates the second volume, stretching over 280 pages to be precise (*2*. pp. 71-351), while its aftermath and after-effects make up the remaining 60 pages of the book. Deza has been asked to accompany his boss, Bertram Tupra, in order to entertain the wife of an Italian business associate (with connections to the Vatican and the Mafia, it is suggested) with whom Tupra has things to discuss. Deza is to be her "entretenedor o juguete asignado para la velada" (*2*. p. 74), as he puts it. The mature but still attractive Flavia Manoia is, however, lured away to the table and company of Rafael De la Garza, a moronic, vulgar and foul-mouthed attachée

[6] See Alexis Grohmann, *Coming into one's Own: The Novelistic Development of Javier Marías* (Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 222-228.

of the Spanish Embassy whose acquaintance the narrator had made at Wheeler's dinner party some time previously and who, to Deza's horror, accosts him as he dances with Flavia. De la Garza is described as "un gran, un inmenso capullo", "un mamón", un "mameluco" o "*mammalucco totale*", "un chorras", "un tarado", "un plasta", "un despoblado cerebro" (*2*. pp. 88, 90, 106, 197, 198, 199, 209); he is a comic character, essentially. However, when Flavia disappears, Deza is instructed urgently to look for her and she is eventually discovered on the dance floor with the attaché, who, in their frenetic, savage dance has unknowingly scarred her face with an absurd and incongruous hairnet he sports. Tupra orders Deza to take "Rafita" to the disabled toilets and to wait for him. When Tupra eventually arrives there, he inflicts on De la Garza a punishment consisting of threatening him with a sword (a "lansquenete", a sword used by a type of fifteenth and sixteenth-century German mercenary soldier called the "Landsknecht", the so-called *Katzbalger* sword), which appears seemingly out of nowhere and descends three times as if to decapitate the kneeling terrified attaché, before merely cutting off his hairnet instead — a descent from threatening, serious and potentially tragic heights to comic relief — and then beating him up.

The entire evening in the discothèque, for that matter, oscillates between these two poles, between the comic and the tragic, constituting a balanced and often moving co-existence of the hilarious and the serious, of burlesque and grave elements, something which we also have in the *Quijote* and which Marías has striven to attain beginning with *El siglo*, where he attempts to wed two separate narrative voices, tones and styles

(representing a burlesque and a grand style) and elegantly effects from *Todas las almas* onwards.

The search and the subsequent waiting and violence in the disabled toilets reduced by me to a few sentences here occupy a few hundred pages in the novel, hypertrophically amplified through digressions. Strictly speaking, these events and the entire scene in the discothèque take up such a large part of the novel precisely because the narrator interpolates a lot of material, the recollection of which is triggered by elements surfacing in the various parts of the scene which lead to associations with the interposed elements, fragments or stories, very much along the same lines as Proustian narrative time, in Genette's reading of it. In a sense, it is the mind or memory of the narrator that emancipates him with regard to the order of the narrated events, allowing him to construct freely his own temporal sequence by way of the introduction of seemingly parenthetical material (as Genette argues is the case in narratives of this kind; Gérard Genette, *Figures III* [Paris: Seuil, 1972], p. 179). So, nine entire chapters or sections alone constitute wholly interpolated material, breaking up the sequence of events in the discothèque and producing narrative stasis, that is, narrative discourse continues while historical time is at a standstill. Among the interpolated sections are to be found digressive chapters revolving exclusively around Death and the Last Judgment, *botox*, or the nature of the Time ruling the Dead, for example, as well as two violent and horrific stories that occurred during the Civil War and are recalled by the narrator's father (who seems to be more or less wholly identifiable with the author's father, Julián Marías, as is the case of Wheeler, who *is* Peter Russell, in so far as it is possible for a character of a novel to *be* a person existing or who existed in empirical reality) who overheard the first and had to sit, horrified and indignant, through an account

of the brutal second during the Franco years, unable to forget neither story nor historical, social and biographical contexts (both stories seem to me to be more harrowing and sickening examples of the atrocities committed during and after the Civil War than the Nin episode, not least because they involve innocent civilians).

To a very considerable extent, then, the hierarchy between the supposed main and secondary story lines is thus inverted in *Tu rostro mañana*. The narrator himself self-consciously recognizes this as an effect of the parenthetical *per se*, when he refers to his stay in London as potentially parenthetical because provisional, "ese tiempo entre paréntesis" (*2*. p. 121), "un extraño paréntesis que en el fondo no cuenta ni nos alberga más que como conmutables fantasmas sin huella" (*2*. p. 119), later qualifying the statement as follows: "Pero nada es nunca provisional ni es periodo mientras no concluye y se cierra, y mientras eso no ocurre el paréntesis se convierte en la frase principal, dominante, y al leer uno se olvida hasta de que se abrió su signo" (*2*. p. 185). There is no more apt description of the effect of Marías's own digressions, which is akin to the "de-hierarchizing" effect in Ross Chambers's terminology employed in his discussion of digressive narratives (Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* [Lincoln / London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999]).[7]

This is, of course, reminiscent of Cervantes's technique in the *Quijote*: not only does he include in Part I speeches on "The Golden Age" (I, 11) and "Arms and Letter" (I,

[7] And this conception of his stay abroad, in London, which makes up and gives rise to the narration, as an absence, a temporal parenthesis, a temporary disturbance of a normal order (the time lived in one's own country), seems to me to be directly linked to the varied temporary altered mental states that affect so many of Marías's narrators and effectively make up and give rise to all their narratives from *Travesía del horizonte* onwards, inviting in my mind a reading of narration as a deviation, a digression from a normal state of affairs and course, literature as the product of an anomaly, creativity as madness, if you like, according to a traditional schema, but a very particular type of — a normally temporary — mental disorder that imposes a deviant and creatively fruitful apprehension of the world surrounding narrators.

38), but he repeatedly interrupts the story of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza to shift attention to other stories that are thus foregrounded, such as the episodes of Luscinda and Cardenio or Don Fernando and Dorotea (beginning in I, 23 and finishing in I, 36), not to mention the interpolation of the story of the "Curioso impertinente" (I, 33-35), as well as the "Historia del cautivo" (I, 39-41); Don Quijote occupies centre stage at different moments in the narrative but for long stretches he remains in the background; Cervantes himself criticises such lengthy "digressions" in Part II and avoids the interpolation of stories to the same extent.[8]

The digressions also have the related effect of slowing down the passage of time and dilating time. This is particularly perceptible in the sword-scene, where there is a disproportionate relationship between historical or real time and narrative extension, between duration of event and number of pages dedicated to it (an instance of narrative deceleration). Interestingly, this is an incident that strongly and self-consciously recalls the episode of Don Quijote's swordfight with the Vizcaíno in Chapter 8 of Part I. This is so, not least because the third time Tupra's sword is raised it is suspended in mid-air as the chapter comes to a close, just as the Vizcaíno and Don Quijote are left frozen in time "con las espadas altas y desnudas" at the end of that chapter, as Cervantes's tale seemingly comes to an end since he has allegedly run out of source material, before he opens an extensive metanarrative parenthesis in Chapter 9 and the character, now author, strolls through Toledo where he discovers Cide Hamete Benengeli's manuscript, of which the rest of the novel is purported to be merely a translation, before the story of the duel is

[8] I am indebted to Idoya Puig for drawing my attention to some of these parallelisms with Cervantes's work.

concluded. Note that, as Luis Iglesias Feijoo puts it in his commentary of Chapter 9, it is the parenthesis that effects the metanarrative reflections: "Salvo su parte final, este capítulo supone un alto en la narración de los hechos de DQ, para abrir un extenso paréntesis metanarrativo, que convierte en personaje al autor (al 'autor segundo'), que llegará a pasearse por Toledo. Como cabe esperar en todo paréntesis, se aprovecha la ocasión para reflexionar sobre lo que del libro se ha leído hasta ahora" (Luis Iglesias Feijoo, "Capítulo IX. *Donde se concluye y da fin a la estupenda batalla que el gallardo vizcaíno y el valiente manchego tuvieron*", in *Don Quijote de la Mancha. Volumen Complementario*. *Lecturas del "Quijote"* ed. Francisco Rico and José Montero Reguera (Barcelona: Instituto Cervantes / Crítica, 1998), pp. 36-39. All the Cervantine affinities are not accidental — it is clear that Marías pays hommage to Cervantes in more ways than one.

It could be argued that the chapters of *Tu rostro mañana* are not so much knit together by the progress of what little action there is, but, rather, by the narration of how the narrator perceives, contemplates and experiences the world, to paraphrase what both Joseph Frank and Genette say about the treatment of time in Proustian narration.[9] The dilation and exploration of time through digression is, indeed, probably Marías's main aim and interest in writing — and his interest in the novelist Cervantes is, to a large extent, also due to such liberties that Cervantes takes with narrative form, as well as with the novel genre as a whole, as is borne out in the references to Cervantes in his articles listed at the beginning — as I hope we have had the occasion to observe and as Marías himself has

[9] Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, ed. Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1988) pp. 86-100.

acknowledged in response to an observation of mine that the salient feature of his writing is this far-reaching digressiveness and its effects:

> De todas formas, la interrupción de las narraciones [...] es justamente mi mayor prerrogativa y quizá mi mayor interés como novelista. En una novela —y sólo en ese género, me temo, en literatura; en música es otra historia— se puede lograr que exista el tiempo que en la vida jamás existe, o pasa inadvertido, porque no espera y va demasiado rápido. Explorar ese tiempo existente y a la vez inexistente, en el que quizá nos ocurren las cosas más importantes sin que a menudo nos enteremos, es, supongo, uno de mis motivos para escribir libros.[10]

As a result of all this, I think could be argued that *Tu rostro mañana* is essentially a novel about time and that the following quote repeated by the narrator could be taken to be its emblem: "A mí me parece que es el tiempo la única dimensión en que pueden hablarse y comunicarse los vivos y los muertos, la única que tienen en común" (*2*. p. 249). It is, in great part, to the exploration of this dimension that *Tu rostro mañana* is dedicated and the reason it takes the form that it does.

[10] Javier Marías, *Letter*, 8 May 2003

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